N° IX.

THE THEATRICAL CENSOR.

BY A CITIZEN.

Interdum speciosa locis, moratáque rectè
Fabula, nullius Veneris, sine pondere, et arte,
Valdiùs oblectat populum meliúsque moratur,
Quàm versus inopes rerum, nugæque canoræ.

HOR.

He who in earnest studies o'er his part,
Will find true nature cling about his heart.
The modes of grief are not included all
In the white handkerchief and mournful drawl:
A single look more marks th' internal woe,
Than all the windings of the lengthen'd Oh.

LLOYD.

Friday Evening, Jan. 17.

CINDERELLA was again played, for the fifth time, as a first piece, but failed of drawing a full house, as heretofore. This is, of course, a broad hint to the managers to discontinue it for some time. "Dr. Last's Examination before the College of Physicians," and "The Follies of a Day, or the Marriage of Figaro," were added. Trash, which has too long sullied the stage; and which falls immediately under the description of writing that Boileau so justly deprecates.

I like an author that reforms the age,
And keeps the right decorum of the Stage;
That always pleases by just reason's rule;—
But for a tedious droll, a quibbling fool,
Who with low nauseous bawdry fills his plays,
Let him be gone, and on the tressels raise

Some Smithfield stage, where he may act his pranks,
And make Jack Puddings speak to mountebanks.

The Marriage of *Figaro* is one of the most indecent productions of the last century; and it is seldom so badly performed as not to give all its *equivoque* the fullest force.

Monday Evening, Jan. 20.

THE REVENGE.

THIS Tragedy claims our regard on many accounts. It is the production of a man whose name will be long dear to the admirers of sublime diction and pure lessons of morality. It is a master-piece of dramatic composition, adorned with those unities which are too much neglected by modern authors. We may say of The Revenge, in the words of an elegant writer of the last century, when contemplating the columns of a Roman temple,

How simply, how severely great!

Mr. Fennell, who has been three years absent from our boards, appeared this evening as the representative of *Zanga*, and was received with a burst of applause as honorable to the actor as to the audience, who, in this instance, committed no error in judgment. Loud as these plaudits were, they, no doubt, seemed as sweet to the actor's ear

As are those dulcet sounds, at break of day,
That creep into the dreaming bridegroom's ear,
And summon him to marriage.

Mr. Fennell is not of the "first order of fine forms;" but his figure is highly appropriate to characters of *Zanga*'s cast. To say that he is a good actor would be too small a compliment. The man of education and talents was visible throughout his performance. With a few trifling defects, which may arise from physical causes, his pronunciation is correct. His action is chaste, but, in general, not sufficiently animated.

With a desire to avoid the rant of vulgar actors, he sometimes falls into the opposite extreme; and his speeches often dwindle into mere recitation. In the following passage he was excellent:

——— The fix'd and noble mind
Forms all occurrence to its own advantage;
And I'll make vengeance of calamity.
Were I not thus reduc'd, I dare defy thee still.
Torture thou may'st; but thou shalt ne'er despise me.

We were, however, disappointed in the invocation,

——— Be propitious
Mahomet, on this important hour,
And give at length my famish'd soul revenge!

In the scene where he exults over his prostrate master, Mr. Fennell convinced us that he possesses much of the energy of Kemble, with a very great proportion of his chaster merits. And afterwards, when he exclaims, "I war not with the dust," a strong impression was evidently made upon even the most insensible part of the audience.

Mr. F. sometimes differs from our opinion with regard to emphasis; and we conceive that he can find no authority for pronouncing the word 'again,' *agane*.

Mrs. Woodham was never intended by Nature for the higher walks of tragedy. She succeeds in the affecting scenes of domestic calamity, in common life;—but, while Mrs. Wignell is present, we never wish to see *Leonora* in the hands of another.

If it were possible to apply panegyric to the rest of the performance, we would gladly indulge in it.

——— O, woe is me!
To have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

LOVE A LA MODE.

Mr. M'Kenzie, on whose performance of *Sir Archy* in this piece we had relied for some gratification, completely jockied

us; although he should have left that for his Newmarket rival to do. The *little Jew* was well personified by Mr. Francis. The jockey lover made tolerable use of his whip; but the Irishman not only carried off the lady, but with her the unbounded applause of the fun-loving beholders. We observed a lady in the lower boxes excited to such violent laughter by the very expressive word, Whack! in the Irish baronet's song, that we had serious apprehensions for her safety.

Wednesday Evening, Jan. 22.

HAMLET.

On enquiring, some time since, of a theatrical gentleman, why the tragedies and comedies of the immortal William Shakespear were so completely neglected in this country, he answered; "Because the public has no taste for them." Although we are unwilling to believe that our fellow-citizens are so perfectly lost to taste and reason, we were obliged to acquiesce; but we are now convinced that the fault neither lies with the public nor with the author. We are continually pestered with the flimsy cant of modern comedies, for no other reason than that our every-day actors feel inadequate to the characters drawn by the Avonian bard. We therefore welcome to our city Mr. Fennell, or any other good actor; but feel a double mortification when he leaves us, to shine in another hemisphere.

The tragedy of Hamlet has so often passed under the hand of criticism, that any notice of it on our part might be deemed superfluous. We shall therefore confine ourselves to the performance.

Mr. Fennell still justified the general opinion we had formed of his talents in *Zanga*. In no character are the port and manners of a gentleman more requisite than in *Hamlet;* in

no character does the actor experience more difficulty in conforming strictly to the ideas of the author, particularly when he is obliged to play in a strange company, whose modes of acting (for every petty Roscius affects to have a manner of his own) are completely foreign to his ideas. Amid all these disadvantages, however, Mr. Fennell shone like a bright star in the firmament. His first soliloquy,

> O that this too too solid flesh would melt,
> Thaw and resolve itself into a dew! &c.

was superior to any thing we can ever hope to witness on this side the Atlantic. His pronouncing the word *resolve*, in the second line, re-solve, displayed both erudition and judgment; and his retaining the contraction of the word *against* in the fourth line,

> His canon 'gainst self-slaughter,

marked plainly his regard for the text, and his just contempt for the opinions of the old school, set up in absolute defiance of metre.

Mr. Fennell, notwithstanding his general excellence, has some defects. His emphasis was certainly false in the following passage:

> *Hor.* I saw him once: he was a goodly king.
> *Ham.* He was a man, take him for all in all,
> I shall not look upon his like again.

Here Mr. F. made *was* the emphatical word, although Shakespear undoubtedly meant to say, A *king*, Horatio! He was more than a king; he was a *man;*—which includes all the qualities of earthly honor. When *Hamlet* says,

> Methinks I see my father,

He should not, we conceive, look upward: the mind oppressed by grief naturally directs the orbs of vision earthward, and "the mind's eye" never seeks in vacant space the object of its contemplation.

> "Did *you* not speak to it?"

Is a new reading, and we confess that we are not yet con-

vinced of its propriety. Mr. F. in his charge to *Horatio* and *Marcellus*, to keep the appearance of the *Ghost* a secret, was not sufficiently impressive.

—I pray you all,
If you have hitherto concealed this sight,
Let it be tenable in your silence still;
And whatsoever else shall hap to-night,
Give it an understanding, but no tongue.

This, although a charge of the utmost moment to *Hamlet*'s views, was delivered in a tame colloquial manner: but in his next speech,

My father's spirit in arms! all is not well,

more than compensated for the disappointment we experienced in the former.

In the second scene with the *Ghost* we do not admire Mr. Fennell's leaning against a tree, after he utters,

Whither wilt thou lead me? speak, I'll go no further.

The agitation naturally occasioned by the presence of a ghost would chase away every idea of rest. Hamlet should not appear wearied, but, from the strong superstition of the times, be afraid to venture further, at the beck of a phantom. This resting, as if fatigued, reminds us too much of Gonzalo in the Tempest, who says,

I can go no further, Sir;
My old bones ache: here's a maze trod, indeed,
Through forth-rights and meanders! by your patience,
I needs must rest me.

With some other trifling inadvertences, Mr. Fennell discovered a blaze of talents towards the close of the play, which, for a while, banished every recollection of defects. Nor would we have returned to thoughts of censure, were we not pledged to discharge our duty faithfully to the public.

Ophelia was performed in Mrs. Wignell's best style; wonderfully tender and impressive. Mrs. Melmoth's queen was finely represented.

We like Mr. M'Kenzie, in Laertes, better than Mr. Cain, who *enacted* that character last season. But Mr. M'Kenzie did wrong to give up the ghost. His voice is exactly the "sepulchral" tone required for it. We cannot say that Mr. Cross played the ghost very *handsomely*.

Mr. Wood, in some scenes, soared a little. It is a pity that this gentleman's physical powers are not commensurate with his taste and industry.

Mr. Taylor did not profit much by the advice of Hamlet. He "played on his part like a child on the recorder; a sound, but not in government." Blisset and Bray were very great in the grave-diggers. The former judiciously reformed the the custom of taking off so many waistcoats.

'TIS ALL A FARCE

Is one of Allingham's worst productions. Bad is assuredly the best. But, 'Tis All a Farce, is far too farcical for serious criticism.

Mr. Censor,

I have just been edified by a truly original and elaborate critique, in Relf's Philadelphia Gazette, occasioned by Mr. Fennell's "*début*," in the character of Zanga, "after an absence of three years." The author assures us that he possesses no *cynical* qualities; but, for my part, I think a critic should have a little of the watch-dog in him, and bark, aye, and bite too;—with "no cynical qualities," I suspect that he would go to sleep at his post, and—

> I had rather be a *dog*, and bay the moon,
> Than such a *Roman!*

H. (for that is our critic's signature) tells us, of Mr. F. (what I have every reason to think very true) that his "actions "are graceful:"—it might have been as well, however, if he had said a little more about his *action* in the piece.

Mr. Censor, some great philosopher (whose book, by the way, I wish I myself had at hand, for it would help me to

give you a *weighty* letter), somewhere observes, that when a performance hath gained our admiration, we straightway wish to know its author. The letter H has puzzled me this whole afternoon. *Stat nominis umbra.* Is H put for *Hackney*, or *Heavy*, or *Hobble?* When I look at the elegance of the critique, I think of *Heliodorus;* when at the fair words, of *Heliotrope;* when at the genius, of *Hippogriff;* when at the mystery of the signature, of *Harpocrates*, *Hieroglyph*, and *Hugger-mugger;* when at the erudition and science, of *Hermes Trismegistus;* when at the arrangement, of *Higgledy-piggledy;* when at the style, of *Hum-drum* and *Hubble-bubble;* and sometimes I am half-persuaded that there is nothing in it but *Hoax* or *Hum.* From the *subject*, I once thought of *Histrion*, but that word has the signification of "buffoon." I should think it *Hocus-pocus*, but the writer, whoever he be, is no conjuror.

Upon the whole, Sir, (for I cannot think it *Hercules*) I have concluded that it is no other than *Hydra*, and that you have in this writer one of the seven heads of the monster against whom your efforts are directed! The prospect is certainly alarming, but though

> ——— self-made giants club their *labour'd mite,*
> Boldly pursue where genius points the way,
> Nor heed what 'would-be' puny critics say;
> Firm in thyself, with calm indiff'rence smile!

Yours,

HURLOTHRUMBO.

P. S. A friend, who is looking over my shoulder, says there is no foundation for my conjectures; that the letter H alludes only to the composition of the piece, and means *Hodge-podge;* and this I believe is right.

TO READERS AND CORRESPONDENTS.

'Hornbook's' observations bear very hard upon the *Ladies' Repository;* but, from our respect to the writer, they shall appear next week. We have also put into the hand of an engraver his sketch of the *Subscription Authors' Club*, the members of which supply the above delectable publication with dramatic information. This *bonne-bouche* will be given in our eleventh number.

The price of this work is 50 cents for four numbers. To be had at No. 42, Walnut-street, and at Mr. Phillips's Circulating Library, south Fourth-street. Communications, and orders from the country, received at the former place.